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**Citation for published version:**

Bremner, A 2015, E. A. Freeman and G. G. Scott: An episode in the influence of ideas. in GA Bremner & J Conlin (eds), *Making History: Edward Augustus Freeman and Victorian Cultural Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University for The British Academy, Oxford, pp. 177-196.  
<https://doi.org/10.5871/bacad/9780197265871.003.0010>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.5871/bacad/9780197265871.003.0010](https://doi.org/10.5871/bacad/9780197265871.003.0010)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

Making History

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## E. A. Freeman and G. G. Scott: An Episode in the Influence of Ideas

G. A. Bremner

Buildings are the most visibly permanent things which men leave behind them, and to know how men built at any given age is as natural a part of the history of that age as to know how they fought or legislated.

— E. A. Freeman to J. H. Parker, June 1860.<sup>1</sup>

This essay explores E. A. Freeman's relationship with one of the greatest architects of the Victorian age, George Gilbert Scott (1811-78) [Fig 7.1]. Although known, this relationship has been little discussed, let alone examined in detail. Yet, as the correspondence between the two men suggests, it was a relationship that was important to both.<sup>2</sup> The reason this association has remained largely unscrutinised in British architectural historiography is straightforward. Compared to other British architectural historians and theorists of the period, such as A. W. N. Pugin, John Ruskin, William Whewell, Thomas Hope (and his son A. J. B. Beresford Hope) and,

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<sup>1</sup> Freeman quoted in D. Brownlee 'The First High Victorians: British Architectural Theory in the 1840s', *Architectura*, 15:1 (1985), 33-46 at 37.

<sup>2</sup> Studies that mention this relationship include C. Dade-Robertson, 'Edward Augustus Freeman and the Foreign Office Debate', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 88:1 (2006), 165-90; Brownlee, 'The First High Victorians', 37-8; idem, 'That "Regular Mongrel Affair": G. G. Scott's Design for the Government Offices', *Architectural History*, 28 (1985), 159-97; G. A. Bremner, 'Nation and Empire in the Government Architecture of Mid-Victorian London: the Foreign and India Office Reconsidered', *Historical Journal*, 48:3 (2005), 703-42 at 714-16; J. Conlin, 'Development or Destruction? E.A. Freeman and the Debate on Church Restoration, 1839-51', *Oxoniensia*, 77 (2012), 147-51; I. Toplis, *The Foreign Office: An Architectural History* (London, Mansell, 1987), p. 107; and M. Port, *Imperial London: Civil Government Building in London 1851-1915* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1995), p. 205.

more latterly, Robert Willis, Edward Freeman has received scant scholarly attention.<sup>3</sup> This is somewhat unjustified, for although his ideas were challenged and ultimately overshadowed by those of the indomitable Ecclesiological Society, including those of Benjamin Webb and John Mason Neale, Freeman's writings on architecture were nothing if not profound, and were important in advancing debate among ecclesiologists and architects alike.

Indeed, as Charles Eastlake observed in 1872, Freeman's proto-symbolist theories on medieval architecture 'awakened' a younger generation of British architects to the 'philosophy of their art.'<sup>4</sup> For this he was labelled a 'philosophic architecturalist', as if to distinguish him from both the antiquarian and ecclesiological strands in contemporary architectural thought.<sup>5</sup> Thus, maintaining the views that he did on architecture, combined with his rather irascible temperament, Freeman was one among very few scholars during the 1840s to tackle the Ecclesiologists head on, confronting them on what they believed to be their own turf. At times their altercations descended into farce. While *he* identified their 'over-minute allegorising' of architectural detail with a certain 'narrowness of conception', even superficiality (i.e., of the surface), *they* dismissed his pronouncements, particularly the notion of

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<sup>3</sup> Brownlee 'The First High Victorians', 35-7; M. Crinson, *Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture* (London, Routledge, 1995), pp. 78-80; C. Dade-Robertson, 'Edward Augustus Freeman and the University Architectural Societies', *Oxoniensia*, 71 (2006), 151-73; Michael Hall, "'Our Own": Thomas Hope, A.J.B. Beresford Hope and the Creation of the High Victorian Style', in R. Hill and M. Hall (eds), special issue of *Studies in Victorian Architecture and Design*, 1 (2008), 61-75; G. A. Bremner and J. Conlin, 'History as Form: Architecture and Liberal Anglican Thought in the Writings of E. A. Freeman', *Modern Intellectual History*, 8:2 (2011), 299-326.

<sup>4</sup> C. L. Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival* (American Life Foundation, 1975 [1872]), p. 230. For Freeman's 'proto-symbolist' understanding of architecture, see Bremner and Conlin, 'History as Form', 312-13.

<sup>5</sup> He was described thus by Beresford Hope. See Hope to Freeman, 17 Feb. 1853, JRL, FA/1/1/50a.

proto-symbolism, as a ‘curious’ form of metaphysics.<sup>6</sup> They also fell out over the issue of nomenclature in Gothic architecture—a debate that Freeman lost. Their disagreements were fierce and, at times, amusing tit-for-tat encounters that left many readers ‘surprised’ at the amount of time, patience, and learning that could be dedicated to a discussion that, according to contemporary observers, was little calculated either to encourage or promote the advancement of ecclesiology.<sup>7</sup>

It was perhaps Freeman’s willingness to challenge the received wisdom of the Ecclesiologists, as well as his alternative ‘philosophical’ take on the development of architecture, that endeared him and his ideas to Scott. Although broadly sympathetic with the aims of the Ecclesiological Society, Scott was inclined to view its dogmatic stance as ‘tyrannous’, and had himself been the target of its censure in *The Ecclesiologist*.<sup>8</sup> Both men seemed to sense and understand the insecurities of the other in this respect.

As mentioned in the introduction to this volume, Freeman was inclined to sympathise with the underdog, carrying as he did a childhood abhorrence of intimidation and bullying, which, like Scott, is how he would have viewed the aggressive tactics of the Ecclesiological Society in forcing its agenda. Scott therefore counted Freeman among his friends, and had a long lasting correspondence with him between the mid-1840s

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, see *The Ecclesiologist* (hereafter *Eccl.*), 2:11 (May 1846), 181; [new series] 5 (1846), 53–5, 177–86, 217–49; See also the review of Freeman’s *History of Architecture* in *Eccl.*, 9:51 (Dec. 1851), 377–8.

<sup>7</sup> Eastlake, *Gothic Revival*, p. 231.

<sup>8</sup> See Scott’s remarks concerning *The Ecclesiologist* in G. G. Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, ed. G. Stamp (Stamford, Paul Watkins, 1995), pp. 88, 96, 134–151, 203–4.

until his death in 1878.<sup>9</sup> Given this, one can say that their relationship, and the views on architecture exchanged through it, was more than fleeting. As we shall presently see, such was their association that Freeman came out staunchly in defence of Scott's position during the Government Offices debacle in the late 1850s, more so than any other noted architectural critic or commentator of the period. The obvious passion with which he took up this cause speaks volumes of his admiration for Scott as an architect.

### **A NATURAL AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ALLIANCE**

Scott's most likely first encounter with Freeman would have been on one of the many occasions he was in Oxford during the early 1840s for the design and construction of the Martyrs' Memorial (1840-43). While there he availed himself of the opportunity to attend meetings of the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture, of which he became a member in 1843. That year he was present at the reading of one of Freeman's papers before the Society entitled 'On the Progressive Development of the Several Styles of Architecture'.<sup>10</sup> This was probably Scott's first exposure to Freeman's specific line of thinking with respect to the origins and significance of Gothic architecture. It obviously made an impression. A little over a year later we find him referring to Gothic architecture as an invention of the 'great

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 203. The John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, holds the correspondence between Freeman and Scott (FA/1/1/88-164).

<sup>10</sup> Brownlee, 'The First High Victorians', 38. Importantly, the full title of Freeman's paper was 'On the Progressive Development of the Several Styles of Architecture, and the Connection of each with the Spirit of the Age in which it arose'. See *Rules and Proceedings of the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture* (hereafter *Rules and Proceedings*) (22 March 1843), 11-14.

Teutonic family' of nations in connection with his design for the Nicolaikirche in Hamburg.<sup>11</sup>

From this moment the two men struck up a firm friendship. In July 1844 they made an architectural tour of Leicestershire together, during which much discussion of the origins and meaning of Gothic architecture no doubt ensued. Moreover, as Jonathan Conlin has recounted in some detail, this influence extended to matters concerning church restoration—a practice that was hotly contested during the middle decades of the nineteenth century, and one in which both Freeman and Scott were heavily involved.<sup>12</sup> When, in 1850, Scott finally published his accumulated views on the matter as *A Plea for the Faithful Restoration of Our Ancient Churches*, which essentially amounted to his position in the wider debate, it displayed the hallmarks of Freeman's thinking, as first delineated in his pamphlet *Principles of Church Restoration* published in 1846.<sup>13</sup>

It is evident in the correspondence that ensued between the two men that Scott respected, even coveted, Freeman's opinion. Over the years there are numerous examples where we find Scott running his ideas past Freeman for comment, or where he reports his findings on his investigations of ancient buildings, in the hope, one

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<sup>11</sup> Scott, *Recollections*, pp. 122-3. Freeman's lecture was never published in full, but one may presume that it contained much of the same language as would later appear in his 'Development of Roman and Gothick Architecture, and Their Moral and Symbolical Teaching', where we find him saying that the Gothic style was 'that noblest offspring of human art, a style hallowed by every association of national and religious feeling, the pure and undisputed possession of our Teutonick lineage, ... the pure, the glorious, the peculiar heritage of our own Northern race ... It is the artistick embodying of the spirit of the Northern lands and Northern peoples.' *Rules and Proceedings* (Nov. 1845), 31, 44, 47.

<sup>12</sup> Conlin, 'Development or Destruction?', 147-51.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. See also E. A. Freeman, *Principles of Church Restoration* (London, Joseph Masters, 1846).

would assume, of soliciting a considered reply (we do not actually know what Freeman said in reply as his letters to Scott do not survive). The relationship is interesting in the sense that Freeman was twelve years Scott's junior. It might be surmised that Scott's self-confessed embarrassment over his lack of a formal education, describing it in terms of near debilitating shamefulness, that he looked up to and was even in awe of those who represented 'superior society', in particular those, such as Freeman, associated with universities and scholarship.<sup>14</sup> This is perhaps why he was so sore over the way the Ecclesiologists treated him at times, castigating him in terms that must have seemed unbearably knowing and supercilious to someone so self-conscious, as if to jibe him for his unwitting ignorance.<sup>15</sup> As his *Recollections* reveal, he never quite forgave them for it. It was all the more gratifying then that Scott found a friend and ally in the likes of Freeman—a man who not only sympathised with him but one who could more than hold his own against an onslaught from the mordant pages of *The Ecclesiologist*.

For the same reasons, Freeman was also in need of moral and intellectual support at this time. What he seemed to want most of all was a substantial connection with the 'real' world of architecture. Moreover, as someone who wished not just to debate and theorise architecture, but who also had ambitions of directing the entire course of the Gothic Revival, Freeman required a sympathetic and active agent, which is precisely what his relationship with Scott promised to provide. Importantly, he also largely approved of Scott's clear-sighted and deliberate approach to the revival of Gothic

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<sup>14</sup> Scott, *Recollections*, pp. 24-7.

<sup>15</sup> Beresford Hope later admitted this mistake of the Cambridge Camden Society, saying it was somewhat unjustified in 'accusing those, who should have disagreed with us on this point, of stupidity or obstinacy'. See A. J. Beresford Hope, 'The Present State of Ecclesiastical Art in England', *Rules and Proceedings* (23 June 1846), 28.

architecture, describing his Nicolaikirche in Hamburg as the ‘noblest work three ages have produced’.<sup>16</sup> It would have been plain to Freeman the way in which the ideas of his old adversaries, the Ecclesiologists, had impacted upon contemporary design, and he must have felt that he too could have a similar effect (or at least wanted to).

The connection with Scott would also have flattered Freeman’s ego in encouraging him to think that his particular insights had practical value. This perceived effect would in turn have led him to imagine that his agency—being an indirect, subtle means of theoretical persuasion rather than any kind of design intervention—operated in the manner of some hidden hand or ‘animating spirit’ guiding the physical accretions of contemporary civilisation. As we know, this was the basis of Freeman’s historical conception—human history (and, by extension, contemporary events) was essentially a ‘struggle’ of ideas and their cultural realisation.<sup>17</sup> Surely the one great lesson of modern history was that the Teutonic and, in particular, English brand of Christian culture had received the torch of Aryan civilisation from the ancient Greco-Roman world (by divine providence, no less), and was now both the harbinger and custodian of world affairs. It was out of this historical conception that came Freeman’s notion of the ‘plastic hand of the Northman [i.e., Teuton]’<sup>18</sup> as being both more able and entitled to shape the course of Christian architecture through the invention of Gothic forms, leaving other (largely ‘static’) races, by comparison, to languish in various states of despotism and corruption.

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<sup>16</sup> E. A. Freeman, *A History of Architecture* (London: Joseph Masters, 1849), p. 452.

<sup>17</sup> Bremner and Conlin, ‘History as Form’.

<sup>18</sup> Freeman, *History of Architecture*, p. 150.



As his *History of Architecture* attempted to demonstrate as early as 1849, architecture mattered in this wider civilisational contest. It was also a responsibility. This was the time of the so-called ‘Battle of the Styles’ in Victorian architecture—that long-run and hard-fought debate among theorists, practitioners, and even politicians, of which Scott was a leading protagonist, concerning which style of architecture (Gothic or Classical) was best suited to represent modern Britain. Emerging as a factor in the design of the New Palace of Westminster in the late 1830s, it reached its clamorous and ignominious climax with the bungled competition for the design of New Government Offices in Whitehall in 1857 (what is now the Foreign and Commonwealth Office), for which Scott was finally but controversially awarded the commission. It was a dispute that consumed the profession for years.

For the historically minded Freeman, much was at stake in this struggle for aesthetic supremacy if future generations were not to condemn the nineteenth century. Like the thin end of some great wedge, its loss might even precipitate an all-out attack on the robust Teutonic ‘spirit’ of English culture, giving free reign to the degenerate and enervating forces of inferior races. As we shall presently see, this is precisely how Freeman viewed the misguided, ‘abusive’, and potentially dangerous enthusiasms of John Ruskin, as someone who would pollute and thereby adulterate this God-given order. Why should British architects look to an architecturally debased country like Italy, Freeman exclaimed. If England alone failed in supplying the wants of modern architecture, then one need look no further for inspiration than those other well-

known stores of the Teutonic bloodline, such as Belgium, Germany, or Northern France (Britany). ‘We must refuse to pass the Alps’ was his dire warning.<sup>19</sup>

The specific ‘developmental’ theories of the Ecclesiologists and Beresford Hope during the late 1840s and early 1850s also presented problems, again, mainly for their looking beyond the Teutonic world for direction, although their insistence on maintaining an underlying, identifiably English character in all buildings was tolerable.<sup>20</sup> In this respect, Freeman saw himself as something of a champion, a counter-cultural crusader even, of the ‘true’ Gothic Revival, among the very few who perceived it in the long view and who understood clearly what its most important principles and implications were, or so he thought. The closing remarks of his *History* are telling in this respect, collapsing his Christian and ‘developmental’ historical worldviews together:

We must work as churchmen if we would succeed even as architects; we must work as for God and His Church, and we shall soon outstrip the bonds of imitation and archaeology, and starting from the principles of the mighty workers of old, may trust in time to surpass even the glorious creations that they have left us.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For instance, see [Freeman] ‘The Foreign Office: Classic or Gothic’, *National Review* (Jan. 1860), 48-50.

<sup>20</sup> It had always been the position of the Ecclesiologists that ‘developed’ ecclesiology should not be a free-for-all, and that the knowledge and use of styles should ‘not be acquired by us like holiday tourists’, but that it ought to have as its underlying basis some form of English gothic. See Hope’s comments in A. J. B. Beresford Hope, *The English Cathedral of the Nineteenth Century* (London, John Murray, 1861), pp. 32–3. See also Hope, ‘The Present State,’ 30.

<sup>21</sup> Freeman, *History*, p. 452.

On the face of it, there was little in this statement to which the Ecclesiologists might object.<sup>22</sup> However, for Freeman, only an architecture based on ‘Teutonic’, as well as Christian, principles would do (the two went hand-in-hand). Gothic was more than a mere *style* to Freeman—nothing could be more injurious to a conception of modern architecture. Rather, it was among the highest and most conspicuous manifestations of identity, a veritable condensation of cultural attainment and superiority, in much the same way that the persistence of Aryan linguistic traits was for the identification of modern European culture.

## THE PROBLEM OF RUSKIN AND HIS INFLUENCE

Although Scott and Freeman saw eye to eye on many matters architectural, one sticking point was John Ruskin. The matter arises several times in their correspondence during the 1850s, with Scott each time attempting to assuage Freeman. It is clear from this correspondence that Freeman disliked Ruskin intensely, to the point of odium. This had as much to do with Ruskin’s impassioned and influential endorsement of Italian Gothic, which Freeman felt to be far inferior to that of Northern Europe, as it did with his undoubted jealousy over the instant success of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), which, published in the same year as Freeman’s own *History of Architecture*, dramatically overshadowed (and outsold) it.<sup>23</sup> With the publication of the *Stones of Venice* a few years later (1851-3), Freeman

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<sup>22</sup> In fact they heartily concurred with Freeman on it. See *Eccl.*, 9:51 (Dec. 1851), 378.

<sup>23</sup> The *Seven Lamps* was published in May 1849, whereas Freeman’s *History* seems to have been published slightly earlier, as the preface is dated February 1849. The direct competition that *A History* was exposed to by *Seven Lamps* must have doubly irritated Freeman as he had intended to publish it nearly two years earlier if it were not for the procrastinations of the various publishers he had engaged (first Jams Burns and then Joseph Masters). Freeman notes in the preface to *A History of Architecture* that the manuscript was ready in January 1848 (vii).

could see the preference for his beloved Teutonic forms slowly ebbing away in the world of British architecture, with his champion Scott succumbing too (or so Freeman believed).<sup>24</sup>

Part of the problem here was the relationship between the theory and practice of architecture in Victorian Britain. Since the polemic pronouncements of Pugin in the late 1830s, this relationship was increasingly predicated upon a certain moral propriety, where there was seen to be a necessary connection between built form and the ethical disposition of society. Here architecture was understood as *reflecting* society, while buildings were freighted with a sense of moral agency in their own right. The connection with Christian culture and its values was also important in this equation (read here mantras such as ‘truth’ and ‘honesty’), hence the impact of organisations such as the Ecclesiological Society. Thus, theory couched in these terms paved the way for practical possibilities as architecture was vested with the responsibility of transforming modern Britain, particularly in the wake of the perceived evils of industrialisation. It was the great moral force and immediacy of Ruskin’s writing in relation to the innate virtues of medieval architecture that gave them their widespread appeal among British architects. Freeman’s conception of architecture was also firmly grounded in a Christian worldview, with Gothic likewise coming out on top (which is why it appealed to Scott), but, unlike Ruskin’s, it was obscured beneath a highly sophisticated narrative structure concerning the unity of history. Freeman had failed to strike the right note; the power of his insight was largely inaccessible.

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<sup>24</sup> Freeman, ‘The Foreign Office’, 48-9. See also M. W. Brooks, *John Ruskin and Victorian Architecture* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1989), p. 150.

Initially Scott was inclined to agree with Freeman's misgivings over Ruskin. In his *Recollections* he notes how the *Seven Lamps* did indeed 'set people upon Italian Gothic', but that he himself never fell into the 'mania' that ensued.<sup>25</sup> On the whole, Scott's oeuvre indicates that this is true, as do his comments specifically relating to Italian medieval architecture.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that the ideas of Ruskin left something of a definite impression upon him, and, despite his attempts to keep Ruskin at arm's length later in *Recollections*, it is clear that his influence bubbled to the surface at times in his architecture.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, one might say that Scott was inclined to appreciate Ruskin's views, admitting 'much good' in them, without being seduced. In following his correspondence with Freeman, we see that Scott's feeling towards Ruskin and his ideas grew more affirmative with time. For example, not only do we find Scott referring to Ruskin's 'delightful' company, but also praising his 'wonderful influence' over the general rise of the Gothic Revival—an influence that was both 'enormous, and in the main, beneficial.'<sup>28</sup>

An aggravating factor in Freeman and Scott's divergent opinion of Ruskin is the direction in which influential theorists such as Beresford Hope took the idea of 'developement [*sic*]' in Victorian architecture in the late 1840s.<sup>29</sup> Hope and the Ecclesiologists did not hold to Freeman's narrow, Teutonic view of medieval architecture and its revival, allowing, as mentioned, a more liberal cross-fertilisation of sources, including those from France and Italy. Aware of this, and at least partly

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<sup>25</sup> Scott, *Recollections*, p. 204. See also 'Sir George Gilbert Scott' in N. Pevsner, *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 175-6.

<sup>26</sup> For example, in his paper 'On the Pointed Architecture of Italy' read before the Ecclesiological Society on 2 May 1855. *Eccl.*, (June 1855), 143.

<sup>27</sup> For Ruskin's influence on Scott, see Brooks, *John Ruskin*, pp. 57-9, 143-56.

<sup>28</sup> Scott, *Recollections*, p. 158; *The Builder* (10 Oct. 1857), p. 572.

<sup>29</sup> See Hall, 'Our Own', 61-75.

persuaded by it, Scott was more receptive to Ruskin's arguments regarding the merits of Italian medieval architecture.<sup>30</sup> His evangelical upbringing would have played no small part in this receptiveness, whereas Freeman's distinct Tractarian leanings, combined with his antipathy towards Roman Catholicism (see opening chapters in this volume), not to mention his Teutonism, put both Ruskin and Italy beyond the pale. In this respect Freeman saw himself as treading a delicate line between what he saw as the Protestant prattling of Ruskin, the dangerous popery of Pugin, and the misguided eclecticism of the Ecclesiologists, thus trying to wrest back the initiative for the 'true' Gothic revival from all three.

Scott too had his problems with Ruskin. Writing to Freeman in 1850 he observed how he had grown weary of Ruskin's prose, which 'though agreeable at first from its oddness, sickens one when you come to have too much of it.'<sup>31</sup> Such criticism would no doubt have pleased Freeman, making him feel less eccentric in his loathing, but he would ultimately fail to convert Scott into a full-blown Ruskinophobe. Scott was more inclined to be circumspect, even charitable than Freeman, noting of the *Seven Lamps* that, despite its problems, 'it is a book we all ought to read and ought to get a great deal of good out of without believing all, much less admiring all.'<sup>32</sup>

By the time it came to the new Government Offices competition seven years later, Ruskin's influence was beginning to show in Scott's work, although he was quick to deny it. Responding to Freeman's accusation of 'Ruskinizing' his initial design, he noted—as unconvincing and disingenuous as it sounds in retrospect—how it had

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<sup>30</sup> Scott dedicated *Secular and Domestic Architecture* to Beresford Hope.

<sup>31</sup> Scott to Freeman, 2 April 1850, JRL, FA1/1/98a

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

never been his intention to use Italian details, but merely that ‘the land of street palaces should furnish some suggestions for a class of building [new Foreign Office] so nearly allied to them in its position and uses.’<sup>33</sup> In an attempt to disabuse Freeman of this notion, and perhaps to bolster his credentials as a soldier of the ‘true cause’, Scott would later point the finger at others, observing, for example, how ‘Prichard and Seddon are suffering under an attack of Ruskin fever just now. I saw a work of theirs the other day which showed strong symptoms – It was very pretty and most studiously and ingeniously designed with half a dozen kinds of stone most artistically arranged – very beautiful but too much of a play thing.’<sup>34</sup>

As time went by, Scott’s position on Ruskin softened even further. Writing to Freeman at the height of the Government Offices debacle in 1859, he conceded that, although he often felt as Freeman did about Ruskin’s ‘exaggerations’, he was not of the same ‘uncompromising turn’. Resigned to the fact that he was never likely to alter Freeman’s views on the matter, he nevertheless ventured to correct his misrepresentation of Ruskin’s theorising as an insult to the Gothic Revival cause:

I do not however see that he has *reviled* Gothic Architecture – he only speaks of ‘savageness’ as one of those characteristics – it is easy enough to see what he means though it is a strange term to use for it, and it is non-essential to the style & arose from a peculiar tone in men’s minds at the time I suppose.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Scott to Freeman, 12 Jan. 1858, JRL, FA1/1/112. John Prichard and J. P. Seddon were a noted architectural partnership of the period. Scott does not mention the name of the building in question, however. It could be the designs for Ettington Hall, Warwickshire, which was begun in 1858. I wish to thank Michael Hall for this suggestion.

<sup>35</sup> Scott to Freeman, 2 Nov. 1859, JRL, FA1/1/126. Scott was perhaps referring here to a draft of Freeman’s *National Review* piece that appeared in January 1860, or

Thus, although he could not agree with all of Ruskin's ruminations, Scott, unlike Freeman, could at least see and admit the influence of the man, and was therefore keen to recruit him to his cause as far as possible. What if he had both Freeman *and* Ruskin fighting his corner? Or perhaps even forming a common front—what he was wont to imagine as a 'united movement'? In order to achieve this he had to affect a truce between the two, or at least disabuse Freeman of his antagonism towards Ruskin. That Scott was unable to achieve such a coalition was not from want of trying, and it even seems that Ruskin was willing.<sup>36</sup> But Freeman, as obstinate and recalcitrant as ever, declined. As hopeful, or even unrealistic, as such an alliance may have been, its failure must nevertheless have been a bitter disappointment to Scott, particularly as he was feeling somewhat brow-beaten and besieged not only by politicians but also by many from among his professional colleagues. Might such a heady and authoritative alliance between Freeman and Ruskin have tipped the course of events in his favour, proving even too much for the then Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston? We can only wonder.

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maybe commenting on a preview of some its key points. Three weeks later he had seen a full draft of the article. Again, referring to Freeman's attack on Ruskin, he pleaded: 'Excuse my saying that I think you state your views on this question too strongly. It is true Ruskin has greatly exaggerated the merits of Italian Gothic – but ... Italian Gothic contains much which is perfectly consistent with our own and which supplies wants which circumstances, perfectly accidental and unconnected with race or climate, have left in our own. ... [we must] not condemn the wheat with the chaff ..., certainly not because it is beyond the Alps or because Ruskin likes it.' See Scott to Freeman, 28 Nov. 1859, JRL, FA1/1/130. His concerns went unheeded, however.  
<sup>36</sup> Scott to Freeman, 24 Oct, 1859, JRL, FA1/1/124. Here Scott lamented how 'you men of genius move in orbits so eccentric that you cannot pull together.'



Returning to the subject later in life, perhaps not by choice but because Freeman in his abiding resentment would not let it drop, Scott was able to reflect upon the course of events somewhat phlegmatically:

I agree with you that Ruskin (and after him the Lille Competition) broke up and spoiled the revival which, till that time, was going on in a very promising way. Much has been done since to recover our position, so much so that, with many, foreign examples are wholly proscribed. It has been the greatest difficulty of the revival. Had all the earnest revivers been forbidden either to go abroad or to look at books on foreign varieties of the art they were reviving, we should be this time have succeeded in reviving English architecture, or in developing upon its basis an English form of Gothic Architecture of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>37</sup>

Considering how the eclectic High Victorian phase of the Gothic Revival steadily dissipated during the course of the 1860s and '70s, it might seem that Freeman's dogged insistence on rejecting foreign influences in favour of retaining an identifiably English character in modern British architecture was rather prescient. But this would be to rely perhaps too heavily on hindsight. Nevertheless, the nationalist sentiments that underpinned Freeman's views on Gothic architecture did find echoes in the discontents of those such as Alphonse Warrington Taylor, business manager of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. from 1865 to 1870, thus helping steer modern domestic and

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<sup>37</sup> Scott to Freeman, 14 March 1874, JRL, FA1/1/22. See also Scott's remarks regarding the Gothic Revival in England *Recollections*, pp. 227, 373-4. Freeman was still going on about Ruskin in the 1880s. W. R. W. Stephens, *The Life and Letters of Edward A. Freeman*, 2 vols. (London, Macmillan & Co., 1895), II, p. 304; Dade-Robertson, 'Edward Augustus Freeman and the University', p. 159. Some sense of what is meant here by the term 'our position' (i.e., English gothic), see M. Hall, 'The Rise of Refinement: G. F. Bodley's All Saints, Cambridge, and the Return to English Models in Gothic Architecture of the 1860s', *Architectural History*, 36 (1993), 103-26.

ecclesiastical architecture back in a distinctly ‘English’ direction.<sup>38</sup> To what extent Freeman was pleased with this shift in modern design we do not know.

## MAKING THE RELATIONSHIP WORK

By the time we reach the late 1850s, Freeman and Scott’s friendship was not only more than a decade old but had been tried and tested through their honest but frank exchange of views. This was just as well, for it was to be tested yet again. The moment was the height of the debacle surrounding the New Government Offices project in 1859-60. This would be their closest and most intense working relationship in the ‘real’ world of British architecture. It was at this time, in the final months of 1859, that Freeman came charging to Scott’s defence, and it was no half-hearted interjection.<sup>39</sup> Freeman fired off numerous rebuttals in the local and national media to the idea that Gothic architecture was ‘barbaric’ and therefore unsuited to modern British use, including a widely reproduced letter to *The Times* which appeared on 19 October.<sup>40</sup> In some cases, as in his *National Review* piece of January 1860, we see a carefully argued, in depth, blow-by-blow refutation of the objections raised against a Gothic building. This article was in many respects an elaborated reiteration of his *Times* letter and a classic piece of Freeman pedantry. Indeed, it is in this longer piece that Freeman’s ‘racialist’ understanding of architecture comes to the fore, appearing very much as a resuscitation of the central thesis of his *History of Architecture*.

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<sup>38</sup> For Warrington Taylor’s views on High Victorian eclecticism and his role in the evolution of a new, more nationalist aesthetic ideal with respect to English architecture and design, see M. Hall, *George Frederick Bodley and the Later Gothic Revival in Britain and America* (New Haven and London, Yale UP, 2014), pp. 108-115.

<sup>39</sup> For this episode, see Bremner, ‘Nation and Empire’, 703-42; Dade-Robertson, ‘Edward Augustus Freeman and the Foreign Office’, 165-90.

<sup>40</sup> ‘New Foreign Office’, *The Times* (19 Oct. 1859), 5. For example, it was reproduced in full in *The Building News*, the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, and *The Ecclesiologist*.

After a long-winded exposition of who said what, and why their suppositions were entirely flawed, including an especially acerbic condemnation of William Tite—architect of the Royal Exchange (1841-4), Liberal MP, and vehement opponent of Scott’s medieval proposal—Freeman reached what he presumed could be the only and most obvious conclusion: ‘Gothic is our own, Italian [i.e., classical] is foreign.’ For Freeman, it was the logic and persuasion of history that seemed ‘to us alone to settle the question’:

Were we Italians, we would build in Italian ... . For the same reason we, as Teutons, prefer to cleave to Teutonic [i.e., Gothic] architecture; as Englishmen, we select by special preference its English variety. ... Gothic architecture is the architecture of the Teutonic race; ... To an Englishman, indeed, the style is connected with the very noblest associations of his history. The architecture of England arose alongside of her laws, her constitution, her language. They are all the work of that wonderful thirteenth century, which made England what she still is.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, a new *government* building in this style was all the more appropriate because:

Our old national buildings, our medieval minsters and palaces, tell us of those early patriots who wrung our liberties from the grasp of king and pope alike. The first age of Gothic architecture is the age which won the Great Charter from the tyrant; which gave us, not indeed, it may be, in their full perfection, ... all the laws and liberties that we still prize. ... And not one of these associations is of a merely

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<sup>41</sup> Freeman, ‘The Foreign Office’, 44-5.

antiquarian interest; no gap separates us from our fathers; what they won we still enjoy.<sup>42</sup>

To the mind of someone like Freeman, such a building, in an English medieval style of architecture, was the only possible solution. Its function within the developed mechanism of modern representational government harked all the way back to the quasi-democratic *witenagemot* of Saxon England.

Scott was thrilled that Freeman had put his shoulder to the wheel in such an elegant and uncompromising manner, especially his castigation of Tite. On a point of architectural achievement, and as one of the original competition judges, Tite was roundly vilified by Freeman as having ‘earned no such right to arbitrate in any disputed point of history or art.’ Aware of the damage that such criticism might (indeed did) inflict on the largely hapless Scott, Freeman tried making fools out of the principal nay-sayers, including Palmerston, by lining them up like so many sitting ducks over their apparent ignorance on matters architectural, sardonically remarking: ‘but Lord Palmerston has said it, Mr Tite has endorsed it, Mr Coningham has cried “hear, hear” to it: how can we venture to set ourselves against such a phalanx of artistic, historical, and theological authorities?’<sup>43</sup> However, as is well known, all of this mocking was to no avail—Palmerston was to have the last laugh in bringing Scott to heel and getting a classical building.

Writing to Freeman in November 1859, Scott had been keen to discuss what he called the question of ‘nationality’ with respect to Gothic architecture, wondering at what

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 29.

had evidently been its misunderstanding. His interpretation largely coincided with that of Freeman's:

The opposition to the claim of *nationality* of G[othic]Architecture arises I think from the want of a word to express *co-nationality* as we do not claim it for England alone but for a certain family of nations – and that the very family in which our modern civilization is vested. What stuff to talk of English French & German being so different in their character! No three great nations were ever so much alike or so nearly allied. The English being the intermediation in both kindred and character. The three have (independently of architecture) been for the last 8 centuries labouring at about the same work in every way with only as much national variety as there was in their Gothic Architecture.<sup>44</sup>

So far, so good. But discussion of this matter was not simply a case of Scott concurring with everything that Freeman uttered, and thanking him for it. As their correspondence reveals, on several occasions Freeman sent drafts of his letters and articles to Scott at his request for comment before publication. A number of times we find Scott making his own suggestions and alterations to these drafts, obviously keen to make sure that his cause was being presented in the most sympathetic light possible. This alludes to the idea that Freeman's defence of Scott in the national media was rather more a joint than individual enterprise; that Scott was in fact co-authoring the pieces with him. In one example we find Scott saying:

I am very much obliged by your paper which I think very excellent. I should greatly like to get in into the Times ... . May I alter one or two unimportant parts

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<sup>44</sup> Scott to Freeman, 25 Nov. 1859, JRL, FA1/1/129.

which might be taken advantage of by the scheming people who are moving heaven and earth against me? e.g. Barry who is chuckling at the idea of my doing anything Italian.<sup>45</sup>

Or later, where he observes: ‘I have read your article *and like it exceedingly*, as well I might! I ventured while reading it to make some very faint crosses in pencil where I thought of any suggestion.’<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps owing to the closeness of their friendship, Scott was not afraid to tell Freeman where he had either gone too far or had misrepresented his intentions. It is here that we see Freeman and Scott diverge slightly in their understanding of the aims and objectives of Gothic Revival movement in architecture. For instance, Scott did not agree with Freeman that the earlier Romanesque and the later Perpendicular styles of Christian architecture were worthy of modern reinvention. Nor did he share Freeman’s views on French Gothic architecture, which were predicated upon too narrow and pedantic a distinction between the perceived Teutonic purity of Norman and Gallic French culture (Freeman’s own prejudice).<sup>47</sup>

They also differed on the origins and purpose of the ‘nationality’ argument. Scott believed that honesty was the best policy when it came to expounding the reasons behind promoting the national character of Gothic architecture; while Freeman, ever the politician, could see no use in giving the game away and thus playing into the hands of their opponents. While going over a draft of the *National Review* piece, Scott observed: ‘We did not primarily adopt Gothic Architecture *because* it was national.

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<sup>45</sup> Scott to Freeman, 15 Aug. 1859, JRL, FA1/1/122.

<sup>46</sup> Scott to Freeman, 28 Nov. 1859, JRL, FA1/1/130.

<sup>47</sup> Scott to Freeman, 11 Jan. 1856, JRL, FA1/1/108a.

We found it around us and found it to be intrinsically beautiful and therefore in the absence of what seemed equally grand, we revived it. The national theory occurred to us when put on the defensive.’ Nevertheless, it was ‘strong confirmation of the wisdom of our choice.’<sup>48</sup> Not surprisingly, Freeman did not offer up this morsel to their adversaries, but instead pushed the point home. At any rate, such a remonstrance must have seemed somewhat hypocritical to Freeman, particularly as Scott had used the nationality argument two years earlier in his *Remarks on Secular and Domestic Architecture* (1857).<sup>49</sup>

## THE INTELLECTUAL IMPACT OF FREEMAN

Despite these disagreements, Scott’s sympathy for Freeman’s broader historical conception is clear. Indeed, in his own published writings on architecture, both the ‘nationalist’ and ‘racialist’ lines of reasoning that Freeman trailed in so eloquent and sophisticated a manner proved influential. They are not only apparent in places throughout Scott’s writing but also indicative, it may be suggested, of Scott’s greater intellectual indebtedness to Freeman. Shortly following the publication of *A History of Architecture* Scott described it—both publically and in private—as a ‘masterly outline’, suggesting that it was the most impressive work on the subject of architectural history that he had ever seen, and that it ‘should be in the hands of every student of architecture.’<sup>50</sup> Scott, like others, as Eastlake had suggested, was no doubt

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<sup>48</sup> Scott to Freeman, 28 Nov. 1859, JRL, FA1/1/130. For Freeman’s anti-French sentiment, see C. J. W. Parker, ‘The Failure of Liberal Racism: the Racial Ideas of E. A. Freeman’, *Historical Journal*, 24:4 (1981), 825-46 at 830-3.

<sup>49</sup> For example, see Scott, *Remarks*, pp. 10–11, 262. He also resurrected it later during his Royal Academy lectures. G. G. Scott, ‘Lecture 1: The Claims of Mediæval Architecture upon Our Study’, in *Lectures on the Rise and Development of Mediæval Architecture*, 2 vols. (London, John Murray, 1878), I, p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> Scott to Freeman, 3 Oct. 1849, JRL, FA1/1/93a. Here he describes the *History* as ‘the most masterly outline of the whole subject I have ever met with’; while in his *A*

struck by the novel ‘philosophical’ tone of Freeman’s writing, which he granted was ‘so different from the common view.’<sup>51</sup>

Seeing the way Scott’s own ideas on the history and appeal of Gothic architecture developed, this was no mere cajolery. The book’s fundamental line of reasoning seemed to chime perfectly with Scott’s own instincts and prejudices concerning architecture, particularly with what he had been saying about Gothic architecture as early as 1844. Thus, as Scott’s ideas began to mature, and his friendship with Freeman strengthened, it is possible to find distinct traces of Freeman’s method and phraseology coming through in his writing, especially, as mentioned, in *A Plea for the Faithful Restoration of Our Ancient Churches* (1850), and later the *Remarks on Secular and Domestic Architecture* (1857). It is even observable in his Royal Academy lectures on the ‘Rise and Development of Medieval Architecture’ (1857-73). In each of these Scott can be found explaining and justifying Gothic architecture in terms that are palpably Freeman-esque.

In *Remarks*, for instance, Scott defends what he calls ‘our Gothic Renaissance’ against the invidious ‘revived Roman’, observing that: ‘[t]he Classicists fought hard against it, but—their own architecture being a Renaissance, and that of the style of a foreign land and of an old world—they failed to enunciate any *philosophical argument* against the revival of the native architecture of our own country and our

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*Plea for the Faithful Restoration of Our Ancient Churches* (1850), Scott says of Freeman’s *History*: ‘Mr Freeman’s masterly outline of the “History of Architecture,” came into my hands while I was writing some, and before I had written others, of these miscellaneous addenda; so that some of them have had the advantage which the perusal of such a work ought to afford.’ See G. G. Scott, *A Plea for the Faithful Restoration of Our Ancient Churches* (Oxford, J. H. Parker, 1850), p. 7.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid; Eastlake, *Gothic Revival*, p. 230.



own family of nations.’ ‘[O]ur aim must be a style of our own,’ he added, ‘the indigenous style of *our race* must be our *point de depart*.’<sup>52</sup>

Earlier he trails this sentiment by insisting that, if English architects are incapable of devising an entirely new style suited to the modern age, then at least they might develop it out of some former period. Happily, he adds, ‘we find such a nucleus to work upon in the native architecture of our own country,—the production of our own forefathers; men bearing our own names; whose lands still often remain in the same families; whose armorial bearings we are still proud to hold; to whom we owe our liberties, our constitution, and our national customs.’<sup>53</sup> Although these passages exhibit the influence of Beresford Hope, to whom Scott dedicated his *Remarks*, the association he makes between race, nation, and architecture also reveals the impact of Freeman.

The theme is raised again in his Royal Academy lectures, where he develops a distinctly ‘civilisational’ argument, very similar to that in Freeman’s *History of Architecture*, connecting the ‘flows of civilisation’ from this country to that; from Greece, through Rome, to the Teutonic ‘Gothic’ world, which, from among the debris of ‘ancient art and knowledge’ were able ‘to sow the seeds and to foster the growth of that richer and mightier civilisation which distinguishes the modern from the ancient world.’ Out of this came a ‘genuine’ architecture, it was argued, one that, in this country, now the standard bearer of global civilisation, was produced by those who ‘spoke our own language’ and ‘who sat in our own Parliaments.’ It was ‘the

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<sup>52</sup> George Gilbert Scott, *Remarks on Secular and Domestic Architecture Present and Future* (2nd ed., London, 1858), pp. 262–3. Italics added by author, excepting the French.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

architecture of the nations wholly or partially of Germanic origin, in whose hands the civilisation of the modern world has been vested'; 'it is pre-eminently the architecture of our own forefathers and of our own land.'<sup>54</sup> In articulating this argument, Scott even resorts to phrases such as 'mental culture', which may be taken as clear instances of Freeman-speak.

It was perhaps Scott's scholarly bent as an architect that enabled him to appreciate Freeman's 'philosophical' interpretation of the history of architecture, and to allow it to direct his own thinking in some way. He was clearly someone who was keen to absorb ideas relating to architecture. For example, writing to Freeman in 1849, he asked if he had heard of the recent histories of German architecture: 'I am told they are very good. One is *Hubsch* [sic] but I think this is not the one I heard most of.'<sup>55</sup> His knowledge of such subjects, as well as his apparent desire to engage with the history and theory of architecture at this level, suggests much about his intellectual temperament. Moreover, the fact that he wrote so much about architecture while running a large and busy architectural practice indicates something of the way he prioritised his interests in history and theory, never losing sight of their value. In this respect he was rather unusual for a full-time practicing architect of the Victorian period.

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<sup>54</sup> Scott, *Lectures*, I, pp. 16-17. See also I: 5, 7, 217-19, 275; II: 292-3, 309, 315.

<sup>55</sup> Scott to Freeman, 3 October 1849, JRL, FA1/1/93a. It is difficult to know exactly which publications Scott is referring to here. The first is probably Heinrich Hübsch's *In welchem Style sollen wir bauen?* (1828), which is not exactly 'of late date'; or, perhaps *Die Architectur und ihr Verhältnis zur heutigen Malerei und Sculptur* (1847), by the same author, which would have been of interest to Scott; while the other might be Carl Bötticher's *Die Tektonik der Hellenen*, which had indeed only recently been published (1844). I wish to thank Michal Hall for his suggestions here.

Scott's general reception to Freeman's Idealist conception of history might also have been stimulated by his travels to Germany during the design and construction of the Nicolaikirche in Hamburg in 1844. In his *Recollections* he recounts having met with the eminent German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) a number of times while passing through Frankfurt (Schopenhauer took his meals in the same hotel in which Scott stayed). Although unimpressed with the old philosopher's 'infidelity', he was nonetheless struck by his 'grand powers of conversation', of which he had never seen the likes before, and, in particular, the 'noble philosophical tone of his thoughts.'<sup>56</sup> We can only guess at what their conversation entailed, but Scott admitted that he was 'greatly interested' in it (Schopenhauer spoke English, having attended school of a time in England). Given this, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Scott's encounters with Schopenhauer were moments during which he was exposed, perhaps for the first time, to modes of Idealist reasoning and analysis, which conceivably paved the way for his ready reception to Freeman's theories on architecture. This may at least go some way in accounting for why Scott did not react against Freeman's approach in the way many others did.

## **Conclusion**

Freeman's friendship with Scott may have been tense at times, but it was a fundamentally warm and intimate one, evidently founded upon a mutual respect for learning and a deep love of architecture. Being exposed to the ideas (and prejudices) of Freeman to the extent that he was, it is impossible to believe that Scott's own thinking on architecture was unaffected by them, even profoundly. It is therefore all the more surprising that Nikolaus Pevsner in his assessment of Scott as an

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<sup>56</sup> Scott, *Recollections*, p. 116.

architectural writer failed to spot this friendship and the influence it engendered.<sup>57</sup> It is clear that Scott rated Freeman as both a scholar of and an authority on architecture, particularly as an historian who could conceptualise the progressive development of architecture and relate its significance in the here and now through a sophisticated understanding of its historical pedigree. The ‘philosophical’ character of Freeman’s writing on architecture, although unusual, nevertheless impressed him.

Indeed, in tracing the lineaments of Scott’s architectural thinking, at least as it appears in written form, it is clear that it is haunted not only by Freeman’s conception of Gothic architecture as a distinct cultural construct but also by his language and terminology. This is not to say that Scott was a ‘racist’ in the modern sense of that term, but that he was certainly someone, like Freeman, who saw the history of architecture—in particular that of his beloved Gothic—through what might be termed a ‘racialist’ lens. Scott’s notion that the development of Gothic architecture was best understood ‘philosophically’ as a phenomenon of ‘mental culture’, and that, in its purest form, was an architecture of those nations of ‘Germanic origin’ (of ‘our race’), demonstrates this view. Whether this influence affected Scott’s actual practice of architecture, as Freeman seems to have wished, is difficult to say; that it affected his ideas and his writing on architecture is abundantly clear.

It is nonetheless worth speculating that Freeman’s culturally and geographically conservative attitude towards the revival of Gothic architecture in Britain was perhaps one of the reasons why Scott’s own oeuvre was stylistically restrained, biased even towards the pointed architecture of Northern Europe. Being slightly older than the

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<sup>57</sup> Pevsner, ‘Sir George Gilbert Scott’. He mentions Freeman once in relation to his comment on Scott’s design for the Nicolaikiche, Hamburg (p. 169).

great mid-century ‘High Victorian’ architects such as G. E. Street, William Butterfield, G. F. Bodley, and William White (many of who went through his office), Scott’s conservative instincts in this regard have often been explained away, from a formalist perspective, as the result of his great Puginian ‘awakening’. But architects do not take their cues from other architects alone. The forging of an architect’s professional persona is far more complex than this. Freeman prejudices—persuasively articulated and slowly inculcated over time—clearly rubbed off on Scott. To be sure, he was more open-minded and eclectic in his practice of architecture than Freeman would have allowed, but this does not discount Freeman’s influence.

In the end, Freeman did not have the kind of impact on the world of contemporary British architecture that he would have wanted (or felt he deserved), particularly in the way that his rivals Ruskin and the Ecclesiologists obviously did. Nevertheless, what we can say is that he influenced appreciably the historical if not the artistic conception of one of its greatest and most accomplished practitioners of the age, George Gilbert Scott.